



# Socialist Standard

The United Nations  
Kyoto Kaputo?  
The Real Class Divide  
The Meat Machine  
Jailbreak Manoeuvres  
Brown Study

March 2005 Vol. 101 No. 1207 £1

## THE CRIME OF 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY POVERTY

Can campaigners really  
turn the tide of history?

Journal of the Socialist Party—Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

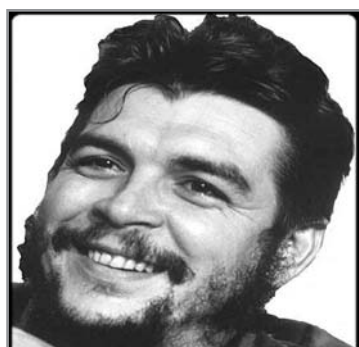




Putting poverty in context. Page 6



Looking for a way out? Page 12



Guevara: the book and the film, pages 16 and 17

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# socialist standard

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## contents

### FEATURES

#### Global Poverty and UN: Natural Disasters 6

The UN wants to halve global poverty by 2015 and 'lift 500 million out of misery'. It wouldn't even cost much. So will it happen?

#### The Real Class Division 8

We're supposed to be moving towards a more equitable society. Well how come class division is worse than ever, asks Paul Bennett.

#### Meat, Money and Malnutrition 10

A Vegan society claims that meat is a cause of famine. So could vegetarianism really help feed the world, or is it all more complicated?

#### Changing the System 12

If you have no freedom to change your life you may as well be in prison. Workers in capitalism get more porridge than empowerment.

#### Kyoto: Fiddling while Rome Burns 14

America's not in it. China's not in it. As Kyoto goes live one wonders if there's any point in it either. John Bissett looks at the pollution trade.

#### Brown Reorganises Poverty 19

£6.2 billion was returned to the Treasury in 2002-3 in unclaimed benefits. Does that mean claimants didn't need the money?

### REGULARS

EDITORIAL	3	REVIEWS	16
CONTACT DETAILS	3	50 YEARS AGO	18
PATHFINDERS	4	PARTY NEWS	18
RED SNAPPER	5	MEETINGS	18
LETTERS	5	VOICE FROM THE BACK	20
COOKING THE BOOKS 1	9	FREE LUNCH	20
COOKING THE BOOKS 2	15		

**“Greenhouse gasses are suddenly commodities to be bought and sold on the world market, a market in which the underdeveloped countries are duped by the richer ones and their corporate elites”**

Kyoto: fiddling while Rome burns, page 14

# Making capitalism history

Staggering numbers of the world's people live lives of abject poverty, on one dollar a day or less. They lack access to housing, health care, education, even to clean water, things taken for granted in the 'developed' world. Their lives are nasty, brutish and short, brought down by malnutrition and diseases which could be easily treated with simple medicines were these available. They may be victims of wars and expulsions, living in refugee camps or prey to thuggery and violence from governments and other rulers.

It's not as if nobody knows or cares about their plight. Charities and international aid organisations devote their considerable resources and expertise to valiant efforts to improve the lot of the world's poorest. Workers in developed capitalist countries willingly make donations to such as Oxfam, believing that they are doing some good in alleviating destitution. Celebrity concerts and fund-raising activities further provide opportunities for collecting money for such good causes.

Yet it all seems to have little effect. Despite the efforts of both the poor themselves and of the aid and charity workers, the conditions of people at rock bottom hardly improve. Indeed more join them as violence, disruptions and natural

disasters add to the stock of people with little of their own except their lives. Whole generations are doomed to hunger and squalor until premature death cuts short their misery.

All this is unconscionable. That our fellow human beings are forced to survive in this state is an affront to us all, a vivid

needs (and more) of all the Earth's people. The poor simply do not constitute a market - there is no profit to be made out of selling food to the destitute, or from growing food for them. If the one dollar a day will not stretch to buying food, then too bad. Countries supposedly in the grip of famine hardly ever have an

absolute food shortage, it's just that the food available is sold to those who can afford to buy it or exported for consumption elsewhere.

So the solution is not more charity, more fund-raising, more flag days in the local high street. The solution is a world where food - like all goods - is produced to satisfy need, not to make a profit.

Starvation amid plenty would be quite impossible in a socialist society run along the lines of production for use, where there are no poor people and

everyone has free access to what has been produced. The knowledge and commitment of farmers, scientists and others would be put towards producing enough food for all. This is technically possible now, but capitalism's profit motive, its wars and rivalries, do not permit abundance to be realised. A society where all work together will have no problem in achieving the potential that humanity has brought about.



The symbol of the campaign is a simple White Band worn around the wrist, your arm - or anywhere you like, and represents another well-meaning attempt to eradicate poverty within a global system which perpetuates inequality. Like a bandaid on a battlefield, perhaps?

**GET a WHITE BAND?**

**BETTER STILL**

**GET RID OF CAPITALISM**

demonstration that all is not right with a world where such things happen, alongside billionaires and vastly-expensive military programmes. Nobody surveying the extent of poverty and inequality can be content with such a set-up.

And it is made worse by the fact that it is utterly unnecessary. The world can produce enough food, water and housing materials to provide the basic

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## How would socialism deal with waste and pollution?



Profit-driven production in capitalism generates huge quantities of

waste while recycling technologies have been slow to get started and the financial advantage of ignoring the problem continues to inform every level of production from car-plants to Kyoto. The rational capitalist calculation includes costs for energy (electricity, labour etc) and storage but not for waste and environmental damage nor for longer term sustainability. Usage-driven production in a socialist society would prioritise best quality production over cheap competitive rollout since by extending the lifetime and durability of goods this would minimize the environmental footprint. In addition it would inevitably set far greater store on minimizing or eliminating useless or dangerous by-products, because these would also represent longer-term energy costs.

The effort to control pollution levels in capitalism is a game in which by far the best individual strategy is to continue polluting, while collective responsibility is a financially damaging option. Moreover, with oil companies increasingly struggling to find new oil reserves to replace those used up and ominous pressure mounting on those oil states not yet colonized by the USA, the perfect solution would be to find a way to turn waste into oil. And that's just what they're doing in Carthage, Missouri

(Focus, Aug 2004).

Cars, houses and factories in Carthage are being fuelled from a clean oil that is produced by the Thermal Conversion Process, a huge waste-gobbler that can take any type of carbon waste including animal remains, car tyres, old computers and human sewage and within half an hour turn it into useful fertilizer-minerals, carbon charcoal and oil. And unlike many energy-producing methods which use more energy than they produce, the TCP uses just 15 units of energy to 85 produced. Since the process only reuses already above-ground carbon it does not add permanently to existing carbon levels.

So what's the catch? Lack of an obvious profit, of course. Says Dr Paul Horsnell, Head of Energy Research at investment bank Barclays Capital: "To transport and process all the waste, pay the energy costs, provide for the capital costs and still make a profit does look difficult at first sight. By comparison, fossil fuel oil is actually pretty cheap." Despite this, its supporters are enthusiastic, claiming that processing all agricultural waste alone would remove the need for the USA to import any oil at all. Europe has shown interest and there are plans for new plants in Colorado and Italy. However the likelihood is that, unmoved by its clear environmental advantages, capitalism will only resort to this technology once it has run out of cheap and dirty options. For a socialist society bent on recycling waste and reducing oil dependency, things might be very different, with small TCP plants (presently too expensive to build) on the outskirts of every settlement.

## How do you know people will cooperate?



Socialist theory relies on cooperation to work, but although capitalism is ostensibly a game of competition, the very act of playing the game involves a huge measure of cooperation over rules, so the ability of people to cooperate is beyond dispute. What is disputed is the nature of the circumstances determining one strategy or the other. Game theory has always been a controversial encroachment of mathematics into psychology. Its inventor, John von Neumann (also inventor of the computer CPU), infamously concluded from his test studies that the logical strategy of the West in the Cold War was a pre-emptive strike. Happily for us, even capitalist politicians weren't that barking mad. Older versions (like Neumann's Cold War example) tended to rely on simple two-player models with limited play duration, which criteria often produced aggressive or antisocial strategies. Later versions have added to the number of players, the level of complexity and the duration of play. Nowadays, among other curious approaches (see Out on a Limbic) game theory is being used increasingly as a way of understanding the complex and unpredictable behaviour of economic systems. In a new study (Economist, Jan 22, p.72) scientists call into question the underlying assumption of economics that people always rationally calculate their individual material outcomes, and suggest that human behaviour is actually governed by evolutionary stable 'social' strategies. In this kind of game, players can adopt one of three strategies: cooperation at the risk of being betrayed, betrayal at the risk of gaining nothing, or reciprocation, warily cooperating but not trusting evidence of betrayal. Of 84 participants, 13% were cooperators, 20% betrayers and 63% reciprocators. The significance of this is debatable, but it is in line with the received wisdom that most

people are inclined to cooperate provided other people play fair. Perhaps more findings like this might encourage doubters about socialist society's long-term stability. People behave much as one would expect: they are not generally crooks, but they're not suckers either.

## Will socialism make us all happy?

Obviously not, if your mum has just died or your foot has just been run over. The tendency to see socialism as some kind of utopia must be resisted with every effort, although the sheer weight of misery pressing on people in capitalism does explain why socialists can be forgiven for sometimes overstating the case. Happiness cannot be bought, as everybody knows, but neoclassical economists, not being aware of this, have always relied on what people have 'got' and what they do as a measure of happiness. Unfortunately for the economists, this doesn't explain why incomes have doubled in rich countries in the last 50 years but the number of people claiming to be 'happy' has stayed level at about 30% (Economist, Jan 15, p.73). In addition, studies of Harvard students showed that Marx's notion of relative poverty (the huts and the palace story) was probably correct. The students preferred a lower income to a higher one provided nobody else was earning more. Income inequality is a 'psychic wound', says Richard Layard, author of Happiness: Lessons from a New Science, and the game of competition for money and status, being zero-sum, can only ever confer wellbeing by taking it from somebody else. Thinking safely within the box of course, Layard proposes heavy income tax burdens to cancel out the superior well-being of the upper echelons.

Meanwhile researchers at Rotterdam's Erasmus University are busy compiling something called the World Happiness Database (Time, Feb 7). According to this, poverty does not necessarily make you miserable, as the Latin Americans qualify as very happy

people (for possible explanation, see above), while the Japanese, Chinese and Koreans are crying into their dollar bills. One surprising discovery is that Europe and especially Switzerland score so highly because people tend to be happier the more opportunities they have to vote. Says Bruno Frey of the University of Zurich and co-author of Happiness and Economics, speaking of Switzerland's system of direct democracy involving several referenda a year: "People feel they have self-determination and a say in the political process, and that's a big contributing factor to overall happiness." Move over psychedelic drugs. If more democracy really equals more happiness, socialist society could be the ultimate kick.

## Out on a Limbic

The fad for cross-disciplinary studies continues with psychology which, having been invaded by mathematics, itself turns to invading economics (Economist, Jan 15, p.68). The new 'science' of neuroeconomics is having a stab at explaining economic behaviour by studying the brain directly. Well, they've tried everything else. So far researchers using MRI brain-scanning equipment have established that the reason people find it hard to save money is because long-term plans involving deferred gratification activate the boringly intellectual pre-frontal cortex while blowing your stash on a big night out activates the infinitely sexier emotional centres of the limbic system. Their conclusion, that governments should force people to save, is not the conclusion a socialist would reach. Workers don't get much immediate gratification. Let's hear it for the limbic system.



## Earth's Destruction Necessary for Socialism?

Dear Editors,

In at least one area my understanding of Marxian economics may be weak, so perhaps you can enlighten me.

As you know in the Preface to the Critique of Political Economy Marx wrote: "No social order ever disappears before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have been developed; and new higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society".

I have no problem understanding the second part of that sentence, but the first puzzles me a little. All previous economic systems were not dynamic systems. They developed to a certain point, beyond which they stagnated, while the new society matured in the proverbial womb of the old. Capitalism is different to all previous systems because it is a dynamic system constantly inventing new tools of production and constantly improving all previous inventions.

My problem here is to analyse what this portends in relation to the first part of the above sentence. Does it mean, I wonder, that we are stuck with capitalism (a lovely thought) until such time as it has destroyed the world with its ongoing murder of the environment? Could it be, I wonder, that the only way socialism can be brought about is by people realising they have to live in a co-operative way or perish? And, if so, when will they realise it? Will it be when capitalism has about 90 percent wrecked this planet?

The Socialist Party have always emphasised and insisted the need for socialist understanding as a precondition for socialism. But has society ever changed because mankind in general considered such changes desirable? I'm sure the medieval manufacturers, traders, bankers, etc never said to each "Let's invent a new society and call it capitalism." They were behaving in a certain manner which was in accordance with their economic interests; the sum of such behaviour over two or three centuries brought capitalism into being.

In the Communist Manifesto the authors say in effect that the general, prevailing level of opinions and beliefs of a given society will always be that of the ruling class. We all know changes in the tools of production change the way people think, but we also know it only goes to a certain point, beyond which they still believe in the existence of private property based society.

My sincerest wish is that the working class both understand and establish socialism before capitalism has destroyed this planet and consequently most species on it, but I can't envisage this happening. I know I paint a proverbial gloomy picture, but I hope you can

show me that my understanding is wide of the mark.

STEVE SHANNON, Mississauga, Canada

### Reply:

We agree that, if taken on its own and interpreted literally, the passage that puzzles you could give the impression that Marx thought that capitalism would not disappear so long as it was capable of developing to any extent the productivity of the forces of production. But this can't have been Marx's view, otherwise why would he have worked for the abolition of capitalism at a time when it was still capable of developing productivity (as, indeed, it still is, and still does)?

To make sense of it, it should be read in conjunction with what follows ("and new higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society") and which you say you have no problem understanding. And also with what immediately follows: "Therefore, humanity always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve; indeed, on closer examination, it will always be found that the task itself only arises when the material conditions for its solution already exist or at least are in the process of formation".

Marx was talking not just about a change from capitalism to socialism but about actual historical changes of social system that had taken place in the past, but in relation to capitalism he probably simply meant that, in developing modern industry and its potential, capitalism had created the material basis for socialism and that, therefore, the establishment of socialism had appeared on humanity's agenda (as witnessed by the emergence of the working class movement). Once capitalism had developed the forces of production to the point where an abundance was possible, it

was open for abolition. Socialism wasn't possible before then, so until then capitalism had still had a progressive role to play. But Marx was just one socialist and not much is to be gained from poring over every word he wrote to try to understand today's world. Socialists should be, and are, capable of doing this for themselves.

We, too, conclude that, as capitalism has created the material basis for socialism, socialism is a practical possibility and has been for over a hundred years now and that this is what people should be working for if they wish to avoid the gloomy end you fear. Will people do it? That's up to them, not us. All we can do is to try to ensure, that when people discuss humanity's future, part of their experience is hearing the argument that the only way out is to establish a world community without frontiers based the natural and industrial resources of the Earth having become the common heritage of all humanity. - *Editors.*

### Bush & Co.

Dear Editors,  
Regarding your editorial in the December 2004 issue of Socialist Standard, 'A missed opportunity':

You are quite correct about one thing. The people in the US who voted for Bush & Company knew what they were doing. They were not seduced. They were not misled. They understood what the issues were and they made their choice.

I live in Cleveland, Ohio. When I realized, about a month before the election, that Bush was going to win, I started to talk with Bush supporters, gently and with tolerance, in an effort to get them to open up and tell me why they had taken such a stance. On the whole, I found that the knowledge and understanding among the Bush supporters was about equal to that among the voters on the other side.

There has been a lot of talk about the role of religion in the motivation of the voters but I (continued on page 13)

## Red Snapper

### Sound bites and unsound nibbles

We're not flying over  
frigging Iran."

*U.S. military official on the practice of sending U.S. military aircraft into Iranian air space to test its defences and spot potential targets. Guardian, Jan 29th.*

As a general rule the more  
extreme the circumstances and the  
fear felt, the more force you can  
lawfully use in self defence."

*From the new Government's new guidelines about the self-defence and the defence of property. Daily Telegraph, Feb. 2nd.*

I think Japanese nationals  
would welcome a female

*monarch in the present era." Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on the proposal to allow female succession to the Japanese throne. BBC News Online, Jan 25th*

We have had people sent  
here who I would not trust at all. I  
have discovered that the Americans  
have made no checks on these  
men. Do you wonder why police  
stations and army barracks get  
blown up?"

*An Iraqi police colonel on the recruitment of defence forces in Iraq. The Independent, Feb 14th.*

Disaster is too polite a  
word".

*David Isenberg, an analyst at the British and American Security Council, on the US's efforts to train Iraqi forces. The Independent, Feb 14th.*

You raise your voice. I raise  
mine. Some of you throw a bit of  
crockery."

*Tony on his marital spats with the electorate, all media, Sunday February 13*

When you're Secretary of  
State for Transport you don't tend to  
get inundated with gifts."

*Alistair Darling, S of S for T, in response to audience question on ministers having to declare any gift over £250 in Register of Members' Interests. Any Questions, BBC Radio 4, Sat, February 5.*





# Global Poverty and UN-Natural Disasters

*If there's one thing the UN is good at, it's compiling authoritative figures, and the UN's data on global poverty underlines the desperation of the world's poor. But what chance do campaigners really have to make history, by making poverty history?*

In January the United Nations Millennium Project published a 3000 page report entitled 'Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals.' The report calls on industrialised countries to assist in "halving world poverty" by 2015 by increasing aid from its present level of £12 billion to a sum approaching £80 billion per year. The Independent (18 January) reporting on the publication of this report carried the headline: "UN unveils 10 year plan to lift 500 million out of misery. Many proposals are cheap, and could transform lives now." The report concluded: "Only investment on that scale will help prevent 700 million slip further into preventable disease and extreme poverty."

The strategy outlined in the UN report forms part of a wider set of initiatives agreed at the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000, aimed at making the world a fairer place to live by apparently eradicating poverty. As a background to world poverty, the Independent reported on the same day that 11 million children (mainly under 5) die each year, 6 million from preventable diseases, while "Every day, HIV/Aids kills another 6,000 people and another 8,200 become infected with the virus" and "Every 3.6 seconds, someone dies of starvation."

The report's author, Professor Jeffrey Sachs, candidly said in defence of his proposals: "The system is not working right now - let's be clear." He explained: "There's a tremendous imbalance of focus on the issues of war and peace, and less on dying and suffering of the poor who have no voice. The overwhelming reality on our planet is that impoverished people get sick and die for lack of access to basic practical means that could help keep them alive and do more than that - help them achieve livelihoods and escape from poverty." Sachs pointed out: "We have the world's eyes focused on the tsunami of the Indian Ocean, but the world continues to overlook the

silent tsunamis of deaths from malaria which take every month the number of people that died in the Asian tragedy. Every month, 150,000 children in Africa, if not more, are dying from the silent tsunami of malaria, a largely preventable and utterly treatable disease." Elsewhere the article states that malaria can be prevented with a treated bed net costing less than £1.

Sachs's concern that the Indian Ocean disaster has overshadowed permanent poverty and deprivation is echoed by pleas from charities working elsewhere in the world. The earthquake and resultant tsunami, killing perhaps up to 200,000 people in twelve countries, has siphoned donations away from these charities and threatens to end their money raising activities for good. But the tragic loss of life and devastation caused by the tsunami has been given so much prominence precisely because it was caused by a natural disaster, where no guilt can be apportioned. Equally, as the Economist observed: "involvement in the disaster of so many resorts favoured by tourists from rich countries in the West and the richer parts of north-east Asia has given it more prominence in these countries than the sheer horror of the fatalities would have produced" (1-7 January) The class that lives by profit has no wish to be reminded of the loss of life and devastation attributed solely to the relentless pursuit of profit and is content to see attention deflected away such things.

Disasters - natural or otherwise - provide unexpected opportunities to those who live by making profits. As with the unnatural tragedy of the Iraq invasion where up to 100,000 people have been killed, companies engaged in the provision of food, housing, construction, energy, transportation, communications, engineering and so on, can expect to reap bumper



**Sachs: "The system is not working right now - let's be clear."**

profits. Aid and money cannot be injected into class society in a neutral way and is either directed to the working class or the owning class, generally the latter. We learn that money is urgently needed to restore the tourist industry and the profits it generates for the shareholders that own the hotels and tourist attractions, especially in Thailand where tourism generates 12 percent of GDP. Tourists have been urged to return to these holiday destinations with the lure that the only way to help the poor is by making them employable once more, which means making the tourist industry profitable once again. The only consideration is profit. But while investors in Asian tourism may have lost, others have been more fortunate. The same issue of the Economist reported: "Insurers at least will be relieved that most



of those whose livelihoods have been destroyed were not covered. Some hoteliers will make claims, as will families of western tourists who were covered by life insurance. Their bill, however, is likely to be far lower than followed the hurricanes in Florida and its neighbouring states earlier in 2004."

Avoidable

It goes without saying that major disasters causing loss of life are always tragic. But while some disasters cannot always be avoided, as in the Indian Ocean, others are completely avoidable and there can be no excuse. The UN Report aims to significantly reduce world poverty without attacking its root cause. According to Sachs, "Billions more could enjoy the fruits of the global economy. Tens of millions of lives could be saved" (Independent, 18 January). Millions of people, it seems, are to be lifted from poverty by trade arising from the globalisation of capital, a process that hitherto has been remarkably unsuccessful in doing anything more than spreading poverty from country to country and making enormous profits for investors.

Globalisation is a particularly pernicious form of capitalist development, which has decimated the lives of millions of people in undeveloped countries. Yet the UN plan is proposing more of the same, calling for initiatives that "involve both civil society organisations and the private sector," and urging that "rich countries must open markets to exports from developing countries." Predictably the plan urges that 'rich countries' must "invest more in the very poorest countries through electricity supplies and roads." (Independent, 18 January). In practice the report does no more than advocate concerted action by corporations and companies under the umbrella of their national governments to transform people into wage slaves. There are no poor countries, only poor people.

It can be no coincidence that both Blair and Brown have suddenly become interested in the continent of Africa - or rather the opportunities it can bring to the owning class they represent. Brown claims he will make sub-Saharan Africa his priority in 2005 while Blair says he will use Britain's Presidency of the G8 to "focus on progress" in the eradication of African poverty as well as countering other potential but less desirable developments. Blair explains: "Famine in Africa will affect our countries because it will be a trigger for mass migration. Conflict, too, drives millions to flee their homes. Both create the conditions for terrorism and fanaticism to take root and spread directly to Europe, to North America and to Asia" (Economist, 1-7 January). Like the UN Report Blair proposes 'more of the same'. He writes: "We also need to tackle trade barriers which push up prices to our consumers, prevent African countries exporting their products and see Europe spending more on subsidising its own farmers than on aid to Africa." He concludes, as does the UN Report that aid will provide assistance in "building the infrastructure needed for private-sector growth."

The forces are gathering and the strategy is in place. Capitalism is to make a

## "The UN Report aims to significantly reduce world poverty without attacking its root cause"

capitalists will obviate migration of cheap labour, forcing the indigenous people to become wage slaves, to join, in the words of the Independent, the "one billion people [who] live on less than \$1 a day. Another 2.7 billion survive on less than \$2 a day." A further intention is to nullify the spread of religious fundamentalism that could interfere with profit taking. Like every other attempt to alleviate poverty it will fail. This is because the plan is less about poverty and more about profits. The plan's success will be measured in dollars not lives saved.

If there was ever an indictment of capitalism it is world poverty. People die in Africa and elsewhere because there is simply no profit in saving them. Conversely, action to limit this barbarism only occurs

concerted move into the African continent to provide opportunities for investment and profit from the glut of aid proposed by the UN and the resultant 'opening-up' of the continent. A market economy based on the domination of outside corporations or perhaps indigenous

when the companies and corporations owned by the capitalist class 'sense a kill,' an opportunity to expand profits. £81 billion in aid - if it ever arrives - is a good starting point. Many African countries have already a foretaste of foreign investment that directs that food be grown for export alongside a population on the brink of starvation. But this no inconsistency, simply market forces in action. We live in a world of plenty where scarcity and rationing through the market and money system is unnecessary and anti-human. It must stop.

The Independent editorial column hit the nail on the head. It reads, "The world must seize the opportunity and work together to fight the scourge of poverty, disease and hopelessness." But what it does not say is that this can never be achieved under capitalism. The world's working people must, as the editorial urges, seize the opportunity to end poverty - not by trying to reform an economic system that cannot be reformed but by abolishing it. The UN proposal that reinforces the institutional requirement to make and increase profits regardless of its human consequences is monstrous - a licence to make profit from human misery. ■

STEVE TROTT

### Fit For a King

King Mswati III of Swaziland has just bought himself another car; not any old car, but a brand new Daimler-Chrysler Maybach 62, powered by a six-litre bioturbo engine, and fitted out with a television, a 21-speaker surround sound system, a heated steering wheel, champagne flutes within reach of the fully reclining seats, a refrigerator, a cordless telephone, a gold bag and a pollen and dust filter. And the cost? Almost £400,000.

And the country over which King Mswati III rules?

Swaziland, entirely surrounded by South Africa and Mozambique, one of the smallest countries in Africa with an area of 6,700 square miles, has a population of fewer than one million, of whom more than 80 percent exist on one US dollar a day, and almost 40 percent of adults have HIV/AIDS, the highest rate in the world. According to the World Food Programme, about a third of the population require, and will probably receive, emergency food assistance this year. According to the WFP (Guardian, 14 December) absolutely poverty, unemployment, HIV/AIDS and poor farming practices, "has left large numbers of households with no food stocks, or unable to provide for themselves".

Swaziland, moreover, has been in a state of emergency since 1973, when the so-called constitutional monarchy imposed by Great Britain became absolute. However, the king is supposedly adored by his subjects, and the country is a tourist haven, mainly for affluent South Africans.

So that all right then!... PEN



**Palatial Interior** - since this purchase the king has also bought each of his ten wives a BMW, for a mere \$820,000. Sadly, street protests by churlish locals prevented him spending \$45m on a luxury jet.



# The real class division

*Class and class division sound like old-fashioned ideas from the sixties, and yet they are more pronounced than ever in today's lifestyle culture. And it doesn't help that if you get ten people in a room you'll get ten different interpretations of what class means, especially if they are government officials.*



It was, the newspaper says, 'an authoritative new study', concluding that class divisions are worse now than fifty years ago:

"Britain is more class-ridden than in the 1950s, as children from affluent families take the lion's share of university places and those from poorer backgrounds struggle to climb the career ladder. People born in the Fifties were more likely to escape their parents' class than those born in the Seventies, says the report, which compares parents' and children's incomes over time, and finds that equality of opportunity in Britain has declined" (Observer, 16 January).

This is a fairly typical example of the way in which the word 'class' is often defined, in terms of 'affluent' versus poorer families, with people 'escaping' from the class of their parents by moving upwards on the social ladder. Varying access to education is often accounted for in similar terms. For instance, the Office for National Statistics noted that in 2001-2, 19 percent of children from manual social classes went on to higher education, as opposed to 50 percent of those from non-manual classes.

In a sense, class is a concept that can be defined as one likes. The British government's Index of Social Class has a scale from routine occupations such as waiters and cleaners, through 'lower supervisory and craft' jobs such as butchers and bus inspectors, to higher managerial occupations such as company directors and bank managers. This is based on the factors of job security, promotion opportunities, and the ability and opportunity to work on one's own and

Social Class		Typical employment
Higher Managerial occupations	1.1	Company directors, Police Inspectors, Bank Managers, Senior Civil Servants, Military Officers
	1.2	Doctor, Barrister, Solicitor, Clergy, Librarian, Teacher
Lower Managerial	2	Nurses and midwives, Journalists, Actors, Prison Officers, Police and Soldiers (below NCO)
Intermediate	3	Clerks, Secretaries, Driving Instructors, Computer Operator
Small employers	4	Publicans, Farmers, Play group leader, Window cleaner, Painter and Decorator
Lower supervisory and craft	5	Printers, Plumbers, Butchers, Bus Inspectors, TV engineers, Train drivers
Semi-routine occupations	6	Shop assistant, Traffic Warden, Cook, Bus drivers, Hairdressers, Postal workers
Routine occupations	7	Waiters, road sweepers, Cleaners, Couriers, Building labourers, Refuse collectors
Never worked	8	Long term unemployed and non-workers

to make decisions about tasks. Of course, since most company directors are capitalists, they probably rank rather higher on these criteria than the average bank manager.

An analysis along such lines may convey a

lot of information about society, but at the same time it hides a great deal as well. By emphasising divisions among employees it suggests that they have different interests and statuses, rather than stressing what they all have in common. It suggests that removing inequality is about people climbing upwards within this scale and so doing better than their parents, rather than

overturning the whole system. The traditional division between 'working class' and 'middle class' also implies that there is a conflict between these two groups, with the middle class being better paid, educated and housed, often at the expense of the working class.

However, there is another way of viewing divisions within society. We can note, for instance, that members of the so-called middle class are as dependent on what their employer pays them as the so-called working class are. It may be called a salary and come in the form of a monthly cheque rather than a weekly wage packet, but its recipients still need it in order to live. From this point of view, in fact, the overwhelming majority of the population

**The most recent class categories**



## Class: it's all relative



are in the same boat: employed, paid a wage, needing to work for a living, at risk of losing their job, pushed around at work, working longer hours and doing less interesting work than they would wish. They shop in the same malls and supermarkets, use the same schools, hospitals and transport systems, are subject to the same laws and government regulations. Above all, they are seen by their employers as a means of creating profit rather than as human beings with feelings and family responsibilities. As far as socialists are concerned, anyone in this situation is a member of the working class, irrespective of their educational background or the accent they speak with.

But not everybody in society belongs to the working class. A comparatively small number of people (the capitalist class) have no need to work or to sign on for unemployment benefit, for they own the means of production, the land, factories, offices and companies. Having a few shares does not put a person into this class, for owning a small number of shares (like having money in a deposit account) does not prevent you from needing to work for a living. In contrast, the capitalists receive enough income from dividends and interest and rents and inflated 'salaries' and bonus schemes that not only do they not have to work but their wealth is far beyond what workers can even dream of. In 2004, the top 1,000 people on the Sunday Times Rich List were worth the extraordinary total of £202.4 billion. That's an average of £200 million each! On the average wage of £21,000 a year, it would take nearly ten thousand years to earn that much. The list includes the Duke of Westminster (worth £5 billion), Philip Green (£3.6bn), Bernie Ecclestone (£2.3bn) and James Dyson (£800 million). These are the people who have several luxury homes in different cities and can afford to stay in swanky hotels and go on expensive cruises. They are also the people who are likely to berate workers for not working hard enough, exhorting us to pull our socks up and put our backs into it.

And where do these super-rich get their money from? It's clearly not from the sweat of their brow, because nobody can work hard enough or long enough to be worth a million pounds, let alone several billion. As the saying has it, the rich get rich from hard work - other people's hard work. Their wealth comes from exploiting the working class, both

## Cooking the Books (1)

### Lies, damned lies, and statistics

Marx argued that by his day economics had declined from a genuine

attempt to understand the workings of capitalism as, for instance, with Adam Smith and David Ricardo, into a thinly disguised apology for capitalism. Just look at any modern textbook - with their claim that scarcity is eternal because human wants are infinite and their introduction of "entrepreneurship" as being as essential to production as natural resources, labour and machinery - and you can see how right he was.

In one field of economics, however, there has been some progress since Marx's day: in measuring national income and output. Since the 1940s governments have published figures for these. Everybody has heard of "GDP" (Gross Domestic Product) and "growth" (which is the increase of GDP from one year to the next) and Marx would surely have loved to have had such figures. But there are shortcomings here too.

In particular how to treat government spending has been a problem, as was again highlighted by a report published at the end of January by Sir Tony Atkinson (who as plain A. B. Atkinson used to usefully concern himself with statistics on the unequal distribution of wealth ownership) for the Office of National Statistics on "The Measurement of Government Output and Productivity for the National Accounts".

Government Output? What output - surely the government as such produces nothing, just consumes the output of the sector of the economy where labour-power is applied to materials that originally came from nature to produce commodities for sale? Yes, that's just the point. But the figure for GDP (which is supposed to be a measure of total output) is obtained by counting spending by individuals on consumer goods and services, by firms on new equipment, and by the government, and adding them together.

manual and non-manual workers, whether they toil in shop, factory, office or call centre. Of the wealth that each worker produces (each day, week and month), only a part is covered by their wages - the rest is taken by the employer, in the form of surplus value. Shell, for instance, made £9bn post-tax profit last year (that's a 9 plus nine zeroes). This is the class division that matters, that between the exploiting capitalists and the exploited workers, not that between workers who are slightly less or more poor than others.

The solution to this situation is not for workers to strive to join the capitalist class, for even if a few individuals manage

Including government spending in this involves double-counting. This is recognised to some extent in the official figures in that the payment of pensions, the dole, income support and the like as well as the payment of interest on the National Debt are excluded from government spending as being "transfer payments". But, logically, so too are the wages and salaries of government employees, yet these are not excluded. Similarly, other government spending (as on purchasing computers and bombers) is already included via the amount for indirect taxes that enters into the prices of what individuals and firms buy.

The artifice that the government statisticians found to get out of this has been to treat government spending as productive, as resulting in a "product" (education, health care, administration, law and order, "defence", though not "social security"). As a result, national output is inflated by as much as 20 percent. The former state capitalist countries of Russia and Eastern Europe did not count such government spending as productive, i.e. did not double count it as part of output, and when they adopted the same national accounting system as in the rest of the capitalist world their GDPs jumped by 18-24 percent depending on the country.

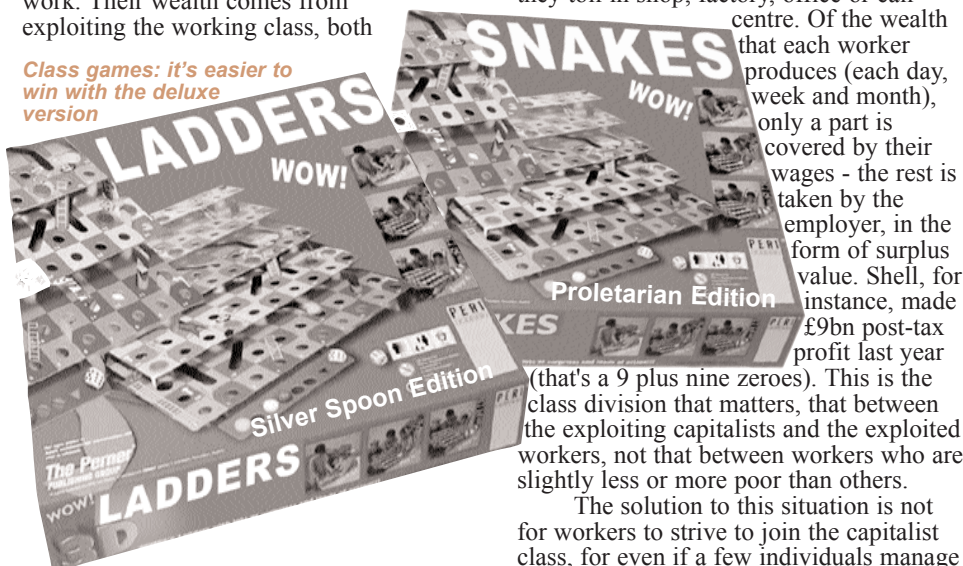
Why did statisticians in the West go down the road of pretending that all government activity is productive? Probably because national accounting developed at the same time as

Keynesian economic policies were first applied (and could even be said to have been developed to underpin them), and Keynes attributed a key role to government spending. Keynesian economics is now rejected, but not the counting of government spending as an addition to output. Instead of getting itself out of this hole by abandoning this statistical practice, the government decided to keep on digging and appointed Sir Tony to come up with ways of measuring government "output" in such a way as to be able to take into account increasing "productivity" (the politicians' "value for money").

If the Atkinson report's recommendations are accepted this will inflate GDP even more by artificially (and arbitrarily) increasing yet further government "output". Talk about cooking the books.



The Atkinson diet that adds weight to your bottom line



this, it still leaves the vast majority of workers exploited and subject to capitalism's wars and pollution. To 'escape from your class', do not dream of becoming a capitalist. Work instead for a society in which class divisions no longer exist, just as billionaires and paupers, landlords and homeless, bombs and borders will no longer exist. This is what we call a socialist society, where the means of production belong to everyone, not to a small rich list. Where wealth is produced to meet people's needs rather than to produce profits for a few. Where there is no social ladder but everyone has the chance to educate themselves in the best and broadest way possible and to do work which is rewarding and enjoyable, without ever defining themselves as a cleaner or a butcher, where everyone has the opportunity to relate to others as human beings rather than as cogs in an uncontrollable economic machine. ■

PAUL BENNETT

# Meat, Money and Malnutrition

*Vegetarians International Voice for Animals (VIVA) make the claim that meat causes famine. Is this really the case, or does the real problem lie in the profit system? Rob Stafford investigates.*

The Bristol-based charity Viva! in a recent pamphlet *Join Viva! Join the Fight for Life* claim that "millions of children in the developing world die from hunger alongside fields of high quality food, destined for the West's farmed animals. The startling truth is that meat causes starvation." Despite claiming that they monitor "the latest research from all over the world in the environment and development issues and argues for change with hard science" Viva provide absolutely no supporting evidence for their contention. Furthermore, a request for such material has yet to be answered.

Viva's position is accepted as a common truth by other campaigning groups and individuals including Animal Aid, George Monbiot, Peter Singer, and repeated in some sections of the press, such as the Guardian and New Internationalist. While there is no doubt that growing crops as a source of food for the production of meat rather than feeding humans directly is less efficient in terms of land and energy,

is there a direct relationship between meat and starvation? Consider a field of corn standing next to a group of starving children. The corn is destined for export as animal feed. Hence meat causes starvation. But if the corn was not grown for use as animal feed would the children be free to eat it? Indeed, would it even be grown in the first place? Simply because two effects (corn, starving children) are found side by side does not imply that one caused the other. Perhaps, however, the supporters of this position consider we have reached the limit of agriculture on this planet and



therefore because some people eat meat fed on grain others, as a direct result of this practice, starve.

Over twenty years ago WHO stated that the technology existed to feed a global population twelve times its (then) size. The American Association for the Advancement of Science reported in 1997 that 78 percent of all malnourished children under the age of five in the developing world live in countries with a food surplus. Just over five years ago the United Nations reported that Africa could easily feed a population five times its current size if western technology were introduced. (And what of future technology?)

There is, in fact, a wealth of evidence to support the view that "famine exists largely because the hungry cannot afford to buy food, not because there is insufficient food produced" (New Scientist, 3 September 1994). Agricultural economist M. S. Swaminathan stated

earlier this year that the "problem of undernutrition . . . is a lack of purchasing power" (Newsweek, 31 January). Even an establishment figure such as Sir Jonathan Porritt in his introduction to Compassion in World Farming's report entitled *The Global Benefits of Eating Less Meat* (2004) is not blind to such facts. He quotes approvingly from Colin Tudge's recent book, *So Shall We Reap*, and states that the author "develops an eloquent argument demonstrating that contemporary food and farming policy has very little to do with

meeting human needs, guaranteeing food security, providing high and consistent levels of nutrition and food safety...Much more simply, it's all about profit: squeezing the maximum financial yield out of every link in the food chain to benefit a tiny number of an already inconceivably rich minority of citizens".

And those inconceivably rich do not just live in the

**"All will be on record as failing to see the economic law which transcends government and companies however large or powerful: no profit, no production: can't pay can't have"**

## SOCIALIST PARTY 101st CONFERENCE 2005

**The Socialist Party is a democratic party run by its members without leaders of any sort, and the way we make decisions is open for all to see at our twice**

**yearly general meetings. This Easter weekend we will be discussing a variety of issues including the following:**

- Far from being all of the same mind on every topic, members are very diverse in their opinions and interests, so would it be a good idea to set up a special

discussion journal so we can debate controversial ideas among ourselves?

- The Declaration of Principles was written in 1904, over a hundred years

ago. Some members think the language is antiquated and could do with modernising. For instance, while we oppose





West as Porritt states. For example, at the peak of the 1984 famine in Ethiopia such people enjoyed the benefits of exporting crops to the UK and taking delivery of Scottish malt whisky. This was just business as usual. Thus it should come as no surprise to learn that although the value of food exported by Ethiopia and other countries in the Horn of Africa during 1983 exceeded imports by \$1 billion, hunger in this region increased (World Hunger: Twelve Myths. Frances Moore Lappe et al, Earthscan, 1998).

For some - but certainly not the 840 million malnourished (or the more than a billion existing in a state described by the UN as absolute poverty) - the 'problem' is an inconceivable embarrassment of riches. Try and imagine yourself as one of the 225 individuals owning wealth equivalent to that of 47 percent of the world's population. Consider that the wealth of just three of these individuals exceeds the Gross National Product of the world's 47 poorest nations. And that for four percent of the combined income of the three wealthiest people we could provide universal access to basic education, health care, adequate food

as well as safe water and sanitation for all.



Wilde: 'charities prolong the disease not cure it'

OK, so is it perhaps not meat on its own that causes starvation, but that it is one of a number of possible factors including problems relating to distribution, drought and natural disaster as well as war and poverty caused by unfair trade, third world debt, insufficient aid, etc? Well, the US recently was able within a few months to send 130,000 people (with supplies) half way across the world. Alas, their mission was one of death and destruction rather than to rescue, provide food, shelter and deliver other essentials to the suffering multitudes. War and poverty even after hundreds of years of social activism are still, patently, with us. But why? Oscar Wilde, writing over a hundred years ago about charity, provides some clues. "[T]heir remedies do not cure the disease; they merely prolong it. Indeed, their remedies are part of the disease. They try to solve the problem of poverty for instance, by keeping the poor alive; or, in the case of a very advanced school, by

amusing the poor. But this is not a solution: it is an aggravation of the difficulty. The proper aim is to try and reconstruct society on such a basis that poverty will be impossible" (The Soul of Man under Socialism).

It is to be hoped that historians living today will in the not too distant future look at present day society and recognize that by failing to see starvation as one of many symptomatic problems that no amount of 'band aids' could cure, Viva and other well intentioned but misguided groups delayed the use of effective treatment. The activities of such groups will however probably be seen as benign in comparison with the likes of the Animal Liberation Front and PETA - who have more in common with companies such as Monsanto than either would like to admit - and other Malthusian-inspired misanthropes. All will be on record as failing to see the economic law which transcends government and companies however large or powerful: no profit, no production: can't pay can't have.

These future historians will indeed be deeply saddened that we took so long to see the link between this law and a myriad of contradictions (clues) in plain view today: people starving while food rots; brick mountains and empty homes existing alongside unemployed builders and the homeless; millions dying of curable diseases. On this last point, pharmaceutical chemist Dr Victoria Hale has made the telling observation that "parasites and poverty are inextricably linked". Referring to conditions such as leishmaniasis and Chagas disease, found almost exclusively in areas of the world where grinding poverty for the vast majority is the normal way of life (and death), she went on to say: "People with these diseases are not in sight as they cannot pay" (New Scientist, 25 September 2004)

Revealingly, Tudge is on record as proposing that if food production were designed to feed people rather than make a profit, then there would be no problem. Eureka! Imagine that: a world in which everything is produced for need, not profit! However, in asking "why we, humanity, allow the world to be run by people who have long since lost the plot?" (New Scientist, 13 March 2004) Tudge implies a change in leadership might suffice. But, two hundred years earlier, the Marquis De Sade saw through leadership and in doing so glimpsed the answer to securing "a saner sustainable future": "You can only govern men by deceiving them; one must be hypocritical to deceive them; the enlightened man will never let himself be led, therefore it is necessary to deprive him of enlightenment to lead him as we want". ■

ROB STAFFORD

reformist movements the use of the word 'hostile' might give the wrong impression. Alternatively, others feel that it is a historical document that should be left as written.

- Should we oblige ourselves to pay dues, or could we get rid of a

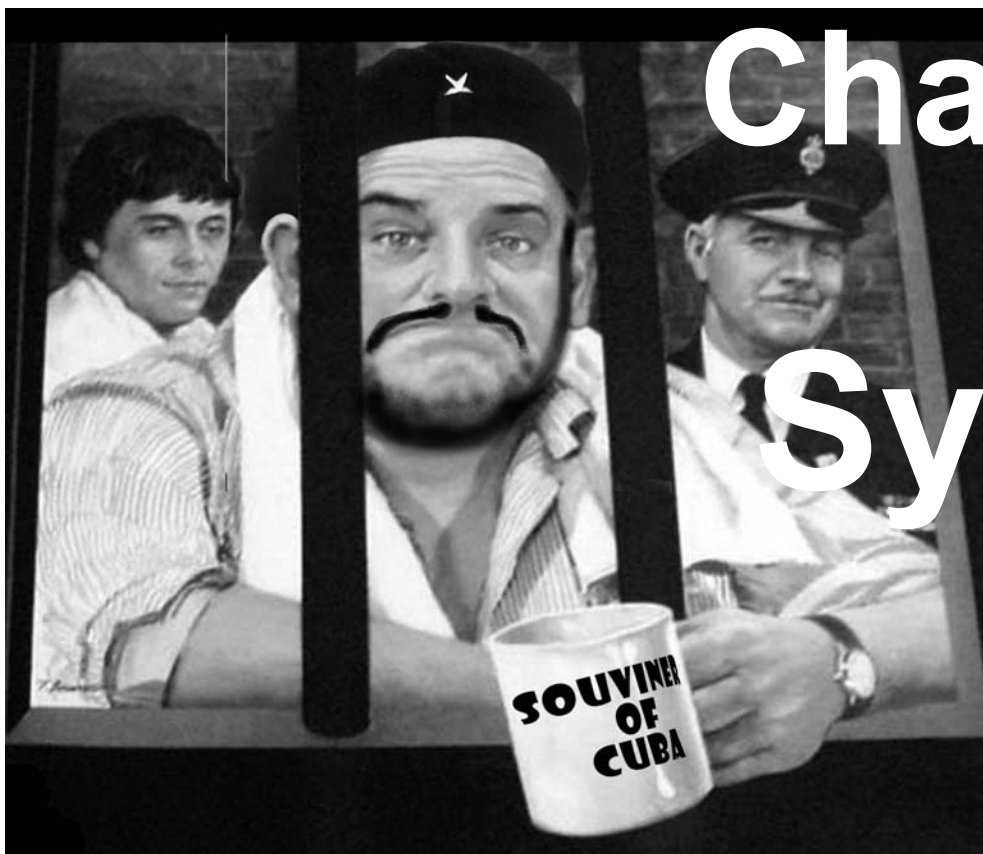
whole lot of unnecessary bureaucracy if we dumped the dues

rule and adopted a system of voluntary contribution?

- Other items: why we keep overspending, colour-coded politics, a press letter network, the word 'ordinary' as a class descriptor,

reports from departments, challenging the government ban on political advertising, putting more speculation into the Standard, wrecking amendments and ideas for more adventurous publicity.

**101st Annual Conference of The Socialist Party at Head Office, 52 Clapham High St. London SW4 on Friday 25th March 2005, 10.30 to 6.30 pm and Saturday 26th March 2005, 11 to 6 pm. All visitors welcome, admission and refreshments free. Social on Friday evening at Bread & Roses, Clapham (TBC)**



# Changing the System

*With its restrictions on movement, systems of punishment and reward, and an often divided and ruled populace, prison shares many features with capitalism. If prisoners can break out of prison, can we secure an early release from capitalism?*



In the comedy show *Porridge* the drama takes place in Slade prison. There are prisoners and warders; the warders have varying personalities, from the 'hard but fair' MacKay, to the liberal Barraclough, and a selection of lesser unsavoury screws. The prisoners also have their various characteristics, all of them in their varying ways trying to make the best of their lot.

Here, then, we have the prison system. As a prisoner you would, by and large, prefer to have Barraclough to MacKay, and MacKay to the more sadistic screws, especially when trying to obtain some kind of favour, or minor change to prison routine such as a film showing every week. Barraclough might do it, MacKay might not. But on the subject of imprisonment itself, all of the screws are united in upholding the prison system, the idea of prison, and the wider social idea of just imprisonment. There is no negotiation that can take place for the prisoners to release themselves, convert the prison to an open one, or otherwise interfere with the prison's core function of imprisonment.

Imprisonment is a social fact, harder than the walls and bars that are erected on its foundation (though of course mutually

reinforced by them). Without a system of imprisonment, there can be no prisons. In the same way capitalism's own prison has its own rules, its areas of compromise, and its areas that are non-negotiable. The leaders of capitalism can change how capitalism works, within limits, but cannot change the fact of capitalism.

Capitalism as a social fact is written into every one of our lives, every moment of the day, and we reinforce it every time we work for a wage and pay for our own goods with those wages. Even if a leader were to want to change matters they would be trapped by our own resistance to change. If there is to be change it must come from us.

It is sometimes thought that socialists have a conspiracy theory regarding the state and leaders - that they are all plotting to do us in, regardless of political colour. In fact, all we have to say is this: that they are bound to observe the system which they find themselves in. Some, of course, are corrupt bastards. Others can cut various deals with each other, and specifically can join in the fight between capitalists over whether finance or manufacturing capital is to do better from the current administration, or decide whether to maximise profit in the short, medium or longer term, but all must maintain the production of profits from us, the subject class, and defend those profits against all comers, whether it be us (by using the police) or capitalists of other states (with the armed forces).

So, appeals to leaders are not the answer, on a matter so integral to capitalism as the defence of profits. You may as well ask for more liberal laws on shoplifting. There is, however, the possibility yet to

be considered of a popular 'political' movement without an attack on the economics of capitalism. Again, this falls as flat on its face. Let's return to our prison example. The prisoners decide to bypass the screws and hold a meeting in the prison yard about how bad prisons are. If the meeting is about entertainment, for example, the screws may be intimidated into providing

something, even unasked for, such as a prison library; but discussion of liberty will bring out the truncheons. Prison riots don't provoke early release: they provoke savage repression, beatings and subsequent lockdown. Imprisonment is non-negotiable, because it is fundamental to the prison itself, and you would have to attack the social structure of prisons and imprisonment to make any change. In the same way, any movement to change a fundamental feature of capitalism, as with disarmament, must address the basis of the system itself rather than engaging in wishful thinking.

Thinking about it, the very word 'Defence' should be sufficient clue as to how much input we are meant to have with the issue. We are not even allowed to call it what it is. Not 'attack', not 'bands of hired killers', not 'death factory', not 'organised murder', but defence, something which we are to be forced to accept as an integral part of our lives. In the same way, we are expected to be glad of a job rather than resentful of our exploitation, and happy to be protected by the police rather than disturbed by the presence of blue-clad armed thugs defending their masters' ill-gotten profits from us at the bank and at the supermarket.

So, while there is leeway in capitalism for change on minor issues, there is little or none for its basics of profitmaking and defence of those profits - the extraction of wealth from us and the defence of this wealth against all comers. Bodies of armed thugs and killers are basic

to private property itself, even in previous epochs, not just its latest manifestation in capitalism. Any appeal to the goodwill of our masters, or the

**“Bodies of armed thugs and killers are basic to private property itself”**



leniency of their foremen, is futile.

In short, the making of profits out of us, the subject class, and defending these against us, their rightful owners, and fighting over these profits between themselves - all these things are non-negotiable, social facts as solid as iron bars and prison walls, and cannot be changed by appeal to leaders or by political action that does not address the fundamental problem from which warfare springs - class society, where social wealth is a private thing, spoils to be fought over rather than shared. Whilst wealth is private property, to be fought over, it will be fought over, and preparations for these conflicts will continue apace.

What, then, as they say, is to be done? As mentioned, the basis of the system in which we live and are currently trapped is the making of profits from us, the working class. Our time at work not spent reproducing our own existence - building modest houses, growing food, producing light and power to keep our machines and computers humming into the night - is a social surplus, appropriated by the capitalists through their waving deeds of ownership, stocks and shares, pieces of paper and the like. Everything that we make, over and above that required to keep us coming back through the factory gates or the office door on a Monday morning for another week of drudgery, is appropriated and turned to the following purposes: reproducing the factories and offices in which we work; reproducing the class structure of police, prisons, cash tills and banks, to keep us in our places; defending their ill-gotten gains against other capitalists at home and abroad, with government and warfare; and only then can what remains be spent on gin-palaces, cocaine and, soon, day trips to outer space.

The way to stop these expenditures should be obvious: take back the surplus! We produced it, after all, if anyone is feeling legalistic. Put the wealth in our hands! Whilst there is a structural



reason for capitalists to prepare for and go to war against each other, we have no reason to fight each other - maybe individually over some resentment, but to put a million men a side into trenches drenched in poison gas or drop fire on children from the sky takes capitalism. Every fraction of social

wealth that is returned to our hands is wealth not put to slaughter or to extravagant capitalist consumption.

We in the Socialist Party stand for such a position. We address the problem of disarmament, along with other unpleasant effects of capitalism, by looking to their root, in a class-divided society, which divisions create the institutional misery of war and arms production, as well as overwork, alienation and suicide, and the starvation of millions around the globe who in any sane society would be given the resources to realise their potential, not as an act of charity but from a simple sense of solidarity and a self-interest in every member of society being able to fully contribute.

All you will get with an appeal to the rich and supposedly powerful, to end arms production and spend money on the poor, is empty promises, disdain, and probably a sense of relief that once more the slaves are not yet powerful enough to rebel against their masters and must still beg for crumbs for themselves and their fellows.

If you think that the appeal to these leaders is rational, the answer will come back, perhaps sotto voce: "This is rational!" War is the logic of the capitalist state, just as policing is the logic of the class struggle at home, and the starvation and physical deprivation of more than a billion is likewise part of the logic of capitalism where if you do not produce a profit you cannot enter the economy and thus must starve.

No, we must work for ourselves, and we must address the problem at its root. The problem lies with capitalism, not with one of its features, and can only be resolved by grasping this root and tearing it from the ground. ■

SJW



*It takes capitalism to industrialise warfare on this scale*

*Letter continued from page 5*

think it would be easy to give too much weight to this factor. It is true that a lot of religious people voted for Bush but it is also true that a lot of religious people voted against him. Some of the religious people who were and are anti-Bush say he talks about his love for God and then turns around and does the devil's work.

I feel that the election was a referendum on war. About half the people in this country like being at war, especially if someone else is doing the fighting. They know that the war in Iraq was started under false pretenses but they like the idea of war anyway. They like the idea of telling other nations where to get off and then using the US military to enforce the US point of view.

Perhaps being at war makes them feel like winners. The US military machine is impressive. It can go out and "kick butt" on a regular basis. The US usually wins every battle. But I think it will lose the war in Iraq. It might even lose the war in Afghanistan, as it looks like the drug lords will actually win control in that area.

Those of us who were against Bush & Company are still struggling with feelings of loss, of disappointment, and even a sort of grief. We did the best we could but we lost and we are hurting.

**Linda Featheringill**, Cleveland, Ohio, USA.

#### **Reply:**

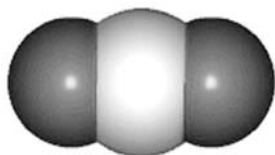
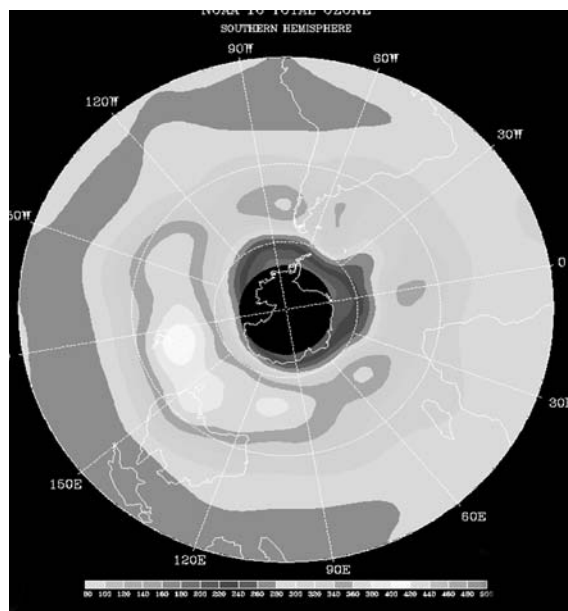
Fair enough, but we hope you didn't go so far as to vote for the other millionaire (whose name we forget). As if it would have made any difference if he had won instead. Governments don't control capitalism. It's the workings of capitalism, and the interests of a country's capitalist class, which determines how governments act. Things won't change till a majority act to change the economic and social system rather than the personnel who fill the top posts in government - *Editors*.

## **Africa: A Marxian Analysis.**

A 30-page pamphlet on Africa, mainly reprints of articles from the *Socialist Standard* and mainly written by socialists living in Africa. Marx's materialist conception of history and analysis of society is applied to:

- **state and class in pre-colonial West Africa**
- **Tribalism**
- **colonialism and capitalism**
- **religion, race and class**
- **Sharia law in Nigeria**
- **the education system in Ghana**
- **South Africa in the 20th century**

Available from *The Socialist Party*. £1. (£1.35 by post, send cheque payable to "The Socialist Party of Great Britain" to 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN).



*Clockwise from top: industrial pollution, melting icebergs, the hole in the ozone layer over the Antarctic, water scarcity and CO2.*

The beginning of February saw the world's top experts on climatic change descend on the Met Office's HQ in Exeter for a meeting called by Tony Blair and in advance of the coming into force of the Kyoto Protocol two weeks later. They painted a picture of a world not unlike that portrayed in the film *The Day After Tomorrow*, where humans have destroyed their own planet through their disregard for the environment - melting polar ice caps, rising sea levels, global warming, and drought.

Evidence was presented by Professor Chris Rapley, director of the British Antarctic Survey, showing that the West Antarctic ice sheet is beginning to melt, threatening eventually to raise sea levels by 15ft. He reminded his audience that 90 per cent of the world's people live on land at or near current sea levels.

Other scientists presented evidence that the world's oceans are turning acidic, threatening marine life and there were many experts on hand ready to present their latest findings on the effects of global warming on ecosystems. Significantly, the number of scientific papers that have recorded changes in ecosystems due to global warming have increased from 14 to over a thousand in just five years.

Blair did not need to call a meeting in

Exeter to find about the threat to the environment. Experts from every field have been flailing their arms around frantically for years trying to get governments to sit up and notice.

While Blair pursues policies aimed at securing Britain's share of Iraq's oil stores for the foreseeable future, we are warned by scientists that oil production will peak within 10 years; that half of the Earth's available oil is estimated to be used by then, and that within another 20 years countries like China and India will have huge demands that will far outstrip supply. Consider the conflicts this will create.

Far worse than a shortage of oil is a shortage of water. We already know that 500 million people live in regions prone to chronic drought. Scientists now warn us that within 20 years that figure is expected to increase fivefold to between 2.5 billion and 3.5 billion people. Already over 5 million people die - including 2 million children - from diseases caused by drinking contaminated water. Again, what desolation does this foreshadow for the human race?

In the oceans, almost 50 percent of fish stocks are fully exploited, 20 percent are over-exploited, and only 2 percent are recovering. On land, soil erosion and degradation mean that half a billion people live in countries whose arable land can no

longer support their own crops. The natural habitats of many animal species are being lost on an alarming scale, which with the decline of bird species, plants, forests - on which, ultimately, the human race depends - signals a real crisis for biodiversity.

### **Leaky Treaty**

Back in 1997, to head off some of these problems, governments met in Kyoto, Japan, to negotiate a treaty according to which the industrialised countries each agreed a target to control emissions of six gases known to cause global warming.

The Kyoto protocol, for those countries which have ratified it, came into effect on 16th February this year, with Russia finally signing up after a EU bribe in order for the 55 percent quorum to be reached before the treaty could come into effect. But this was without the support of the USA, which, with only 5 percent of the world's population, produces 36 percent of carbon emissions. And the reason for US obstinacy? They simply felt that China and other developing countries, not facing the costs of cutting emissions, would gain a competitive edge on them.

The agreement, the first "legally binding" treaty on the environment, gives each of the industrialised and ratifying countries of the world their own limit to the greenhouse gas emissions they can pump into the atmosphere. It is envisaged that this will eventually lead to a situation in which the world produces no more greenhouse gasses than the environment can tolerate.

Will the Kyoto treaty stave off the unimaginable? Well, it would seem that not only are the treaty's formal greenhouse gas emission reduction objectives wholly inadequate compared to what scientists say is actually necessary, but also the treaty's corporate-friendly, market-based mechanisms to achieve these reductions appear counterproductive.

To start with, the treaty requires that Annex One countries (the industrialised countries), which have hitherto been the biggest polluters, reduce their greenhouse gas emissions on average to just 5.2 percent below their 1990 levels by 2012. However, even though a 60-80 percent reduction is said to be needed by 2050, no additional reduction goals or timetables are in place for beyond the year 2012.

Plenty of opportunity is provided by the treaty's "flexible mechanisms" for the

# Kyoto: fiddling while Rome burns

*The Kyoto Protocol may be worth more than the paper it's printed on, but only just. While countries barter their carbon credits, the planet grows yet more ill. John Bissett asks whether the treaty can ever hope to clear the air.*



governments of richer countries to indulge in creative accounting. It is possible for governments, with a bit of nifty handwork, to claim cutbacks in their country's overall greenhouse gas emissions although actual reductions may not have taken place. Furthermore, a country might even increase its emissions and still be credited with a reduction.

Industrialised countries who find they have in fact made reductions in greenhouse gas emissions below that required of them are moreover entitled to sell on their spare polluter credits to those countries either unable or unwilling to adhere to their own set reduction targets. This arrangement - to sell the right to pollute - also became the privilege of corporations in January when European carbon markets became operational.

Emission measurements are by and large taken from a starting date of 1990, and the targets for each country must be reached by the period 2008-12. Former state capitalist countries (i.e. the former Soviet Union), referred to in Kyoto jargon as "countries in transition", were allowed to chose a different date since, after the collapse of the Kremlin's empire, a lot of heavy industry closed, resulting in a 40 per cent fall in emissions. This means that countries such as Russia and Ukraine will be in a position to sell other Annex One countries the right to increase their greenhouse gas emissions by that figure.

There are numerous accountancy tricks that help countries reach their Kyoto commitments, without them actually reducing their very own emissions. For instance, corporations investing in new technology will be able to palm their decrepit technology off onto poor countries, to whom such technology is an advance on

## “Kyoto looks nothing more than some environmental monopoly board on which governments can buy, sell and trade the air we breathe.”

what they currently have, and again demand emission credits. And of course, there is further logic to this - with such outdated technology, factories in poorer countries are hardly going to steal a competitive edge on their western counterparts.

Greenhouse gasses are suddenly commodities to be bought and sold on the world market, a market

in which the underdeveloped countries are duped by the richer ones and their corporate elites. And when the time comes for underdeveloped countries to make reductions they will find themselves in a fix, unable to afford the technology needed to curb their own rampant pollution.

### What happens after 2012?

Kyoto is hardly going to save the planet as it stands. For one thing it was only ever foreseen as a first step to curb global warming and to be replaced after 2012 with tougher legislation. But even in seven years time there will be trouble. At last year's climate summit in Buenos Aires, China and India could be found joining the US, the major villain of Kyoto, in an attempt to scupper any post-2012 agreements.

Interestingly, and as The Christian Science Monitor recently noted, by 2012 coal-fired plants in those three same countries will be emitting 2.5 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> annually, five times the cuts ordered by the Kyoto protocol. Add to this projections from the International Energy Agency that there will be a 60 per cent rise in global energy within 25 years, the bulk of this coming from carbon-emitting fuels and you begin to wonder just what lies ahead.

Currently, global CO<sub>2</sub> levels are the highest they have been for 20 million years. Meanwhile the Intergovernmental Panel on Climatic Change predicts that by the year 2100 temperatures will have risen by anything up to 5.8 degrees centigrade.

Kyoto looks nothing more than some

environmental monopoly board on which governments can buy, sell and trade the air we breathe.

Ironically, whilst the world's governments will heed calls for an early warning system that can warn of natural disaster which we have no control over - such as one warning of tsunamis in the Indian ocean - they are somewhat deaf when it comes to those blaring in our ears, the early warning systems scientists have been shouting about for decades: acid rain, soil erosion, poisonous seas, melting glaciers, a hole in the ozone layer, etc.

And it's not as if these are new problems - the world has known about them for so long that the facts seem hackneyed. The point is, these early warning systems are ringing non-stop. Capitalism's problems are hitting the human race with the force of many tsunamis a day, killing millions, and more, threatening global disaster. Yet governments believe the problem can be traded away, camouflaged by a creative accounting that 'mother nature' won't notice.

And the simple truth is that we place our trust in governments to solve environmental problems within the context of capitalism at our peril. They serve to administer the present system on behalf of a minority for whom environmental protection is an obstacle to profit, to whom any means is legitimate in the pursuit of that profit.

When you consider the future of the planet you are faced with two choices. You can continue to support the defenders of capitalism - they come in many disguises - and acquiesce in the destruction of the natural global environment, or stand in their way by joining the struggle for socialism and the destruction of a system that will nonchalantly prioritise profit over not only human well-being but the world we live in. But, hey, don't wait until your living room is a foot deep in water to make up your mind. Think hard and now. Capitalism, and with it the worsening of every environmental problem we cite, or socialism, a world social system that places control of the Earth in the hands of a global majority who will tend to it with respect and without the barriers profit places in the path of production? ■

JOHN BISSETT



### Cooking the Books (2)

## Vice's homage to virtue

At their annual "World Economic Forum" jamboree in the Swiss ski resort of Davos in the last week of January, the world's political and business leaders vied with each other to strike an "ethical" pose. It was, commented one newspaper, a case of ethics with everything.

There is even a magazine called the Ethical Corporation. At the time of the Tsunami its Asia-Pacific editor, James Rose, was active in the Australian press. "Put profits aside in the rebuilding" read the headline of one of his articles, "Shareholders should let companies assist in the post-tsunami reconstruction" (Australian, 4 January). "Companies must look beyond the bottom line" read another, "Corporate leaders see only profits as important. They must change" (Melbourne Age, 7 January).

Shareholders in construction companies would be only too willing to let them assist in the rebuilding. In fact, shares in them went up in anticipation of juicy reconstruction contracts. But this was not what Rose had in mind. Supply lines for aid, he wrote, "could be usefully shortened if corporations went in and did more of the work themselves, gratis, under the direction of the charity groups on the ground", and:

"What we need here is for corporations to throw off the cloak of self-interest. The best thing they could do is to approach the situation as it now stands as if it were a legitimate business opportunity, apart

from one important factor: they will expect no financial or brand rewards".

It's a nice thought. The skills and the techniques are there, there are people in need, so why not bring the two together without any thought of profit? But it's not going to happen, because that's not the way capitalism works or could ever work.

Capitalism is a profit-making system and capitalist corporations have no choice but to put profits first. Not because the top executives are selfish or greedy or insensitive but because that's the economic logic of the system. Corporate executives are merely what Marx once called "personifications of capital" and capitalism is an impersonal economic mechanism of the accumulation of capital out of profits which those in charge have to apply irrespective of their personal opinions or preferences.

Rose is aware of what he is up against as he wrote in the same issue of The Australian:

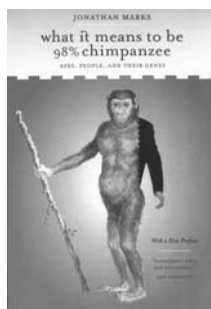
"What is a corporation? On one level, it's a pure money-making machine. There is solid opinion to say that's all it can be. Even if a corporation wants to be a paragon of the New Age, it is constrained by the fiduciary obligations to its shareholders. It is legally constructed to focus on its and its owners' self-interest".

That opinion is indeed solid, very solid. Corporations don't seek to maximise profits just because this is laid down by the law, as Rose suggests. The law merely reflects the underlying reality of capitalism. It's not the law that needs changing - it never will be on this point - but the whole profit system that needs dumping.



### Monkey Business

**What It Means to Be 98% chimpanzee. Apes, People and Their Genes. Jonathan Marks. University of California Press. Paperback.**



Marks's answer to the finding that humans share 98 percent of so of their DNA with chimps is that it doesn't mean much more than we already knew and certainly not what some read into it. It confirms that millions of year ago (7 million is the generally accepted estimate)

humans and chimps had a common ancestor. More generally, since all life-forms are built up of DNA, it confirms Darwin's view that all those that exist and have existed on Earth evolved from a single original form. On the other hand, it does not mean that humans are 98 percent chimpanzee (any more than the fact that we share 35 percent of our DNA with daffodils means that we are 35 percent daffodil) and that therefore the study of chimpanzee behaviour is relevant to the study of human behaviour. As Marks puts it succinctly, "you can't get at human nature from chimpanzees. They're not human." We are not naked apes, but clothed humans; which makes all the difference.

Marks goes for those who think that genes are the most important factor in human behaviour (the Social Darwinists and the eugenicists in the past and the behavioural geneticists, sociobiologists and evolutionary psychologists today), making the simple, but often ignored, point that we don't actually know how any gene works. We know that genes produce proteins for the cells that constitute the body but not yet how this translates into a person's physical attributes let alone (if it does) into any mental traits. What we know at the moment is that certain defects in certain genes result in certain abnormal conditions (such as cystic fibrosis), but not how a non-defective gene produces a normal condition.

This is why, Marks insists, when someone makes a claim to have discovered a gene for something, for instance homosexuality, they can't just point to statistical correlations or even similar brain structures, they would need to produce a verifiable and verified causal explanation of precisely how the gene in question translates into the particular behaviour pattern. As he puts it, "what is widespread is not necessarily innate" and "genetic conclusions require genetic data".

"The fact that something is consistently observed does not imply that it has a genetic cause. We know that. If you want to argue about science and about genetics, you need controlled data and genetic data."

He warns modern geneticists about the dangers of making claims that go well beyond the existing (genetic) evidence, by pointing to the dominant view amongst geneticists in the 1920s which was racist and justified the forced sterilisation of

"mental defectives" (not just in Nazi Germany but in America and even in Sweden). They were wrong and the practical consequences were disastrous. Seeing that we don't yet know how normal genes translate into physical attributes, modern geneticists should, he suggests, show a little more humility before propagating their speculations about human behaviour being genetically determined as if it were an established scientific fact.

Marks is also good on the myth of race. "Race", he says, "turns out to be an optical illusion":

"[W]e can, of course, make comparisons between groups of people and study their differences. The problem is invariably what meaning to assign to those differences. If we know that there are gradients, not boundaries; that human variation is patterned locally, not transcontinentally; that the extremes are not the purest representatives of anything, but simply the most divergent; that populations are invariably mixed with their neighbors, and in the last half-millennium with people from far away; and that clustering populations into larger units is a cultural act that values some differences as important and submerges others - then race evaporates as a natural unit."

We have to record, however, that in the last five of the book's twelve chapters Marks embraces some strange positions, such as defending the right of a North American Indian tribe to veto research on a 9,000-year old skeleton found on their former tribal territory as this conflicted with their "spiritual" values (much as the Mediaeval Church had "spiritual" reasons for frowning on the dissection of human bodies). Similarly, he defends the refusal of certain indigenous people in other parts of the world to have their DNA recorded. Here, if it true, they may have a legitimate point about it being patented and used by others to make money, but this is a distortion due to the existence of capitalism. In principle, there is nothing wrong with recording the DNA of peoples who have been relatively isolated from the rest of humanity.

ALB

### Guevarian Ideology

**Che Guevara Reader: Writings on Politics and Revolution. Edited by David Deutschmann. Ocean Press. £15.95.**

The reader comprises speeches and articles that trace the development and implementation of Guevara's theories from 1956 to a time shortly before his death in October 1967. The book falls into four sections covering the period prior to the Cuban Revolution, Guevara's work in the Cuban government, international issues and selected letters.

Guevara's ideology combined



romanticism with elitism. He passionately believed that an enlightened conspiratorial minority could establish 'socialism' and use political power to free the ideas of the uneducated masses - a theory where mass political consciousness emerges after a revolution initiated by a small minority or vanguard. In this struggle, the vanguard is the "the catalysing agent that create[d] the subjective conditions necessary for victory" as well as the "generator of revolutionary consciousness."

Guevara was essentially a guerrilla leader engaged in a war of national liberation. He believed that only violent revolution, waged in the countryside, could end colonial exploitation and introduce 'socialism' into Latin America. Urban areas were to remain essentially passive being vulnerable to betrayal and superior military force. The basis of this struggle was the peasantry, but his attitude is ambivalent, fearing that peasant ignorance, isolation and hunger for land makes them unreliable and in need of direction from "revolutionary intellectuals."

In the second section on the 'Cuba Years 1959-65', we gain an insight into the difficulties of 'Democratic Centralism' and the organisation of the state-run capitalism that followed the Cuban insurrection. The economy is based on commodity production where imports are dependent on maximising exports at competitive market prices. As with the rest of Latin America the central problem is the "one crop economy," with Cuba "slaves to sugarcane." His speeches call for diversification and increased output prompting the introduction of 'emulation,' involving setting factory and individual output targets to maximise industrial output. His theories were greatly influenced by Lenin, who is quoted throughout his works. In the article entitled, 'On the Budgetary Finance System' Guevara uses a quotation from Lenin in an attempt to explain how state capitalism is a step towards an eventual 'socialist' society, necessitating the introduction of capitalist accounting methods, price setting, money, factory profit, bonuses and formal contracts with monetary penalties.

But increasing output means greater incentives and this conflicts with Guevara's image of 'socialist morality' where work and achieving output targets is the workers moral obligation, his "social duty." Cuba, he claims, is 'on the road' to 'socialism' while the transition to 'communism' a distant vision in the future. At the same time he is compelled to accept that trading with world capitalism necessarily imposed severe limitations on his action, in short acknowledging that the economic conditions dictate the country's direction. National defence, nationalisation, industrialisation, agrarian reform and the development of foreign trade, particularly with Russia, are all urgent issues that have to be addressed if Cuba is to survive.

In the years following the Cuban Revolution his speeches impart increasing frustration as the vanguard attempts to impose 'socialism' on the ignorant masses that neither understood nor wanted it. In passionate speeches to students, cadres and trade unionists he repeatedly stresses the need for education to strive for the 'socialist ideal' and eradicate the bad habits from the "previous epoch."

The third part of the book is a collection of Guevara's speeches and articles



on international issues. Not unexpectedly, the rhetoric is anti-Americanism and anti-colonialist and the message to the people of Latin America is to follow Cuba's example and create "many Vietnams" to expel US imperialism and achieve economic independence. Other speeches demand fairness in trade and an end to dumping, price fixing, foreign debt and foreign bases - in fact all the things you might expect from a leader struggling to administer capitalism in an underdeveloped country surrounded by a hostile world.

A book of limited historical interest carrying a bankrupt anachronistic prescription for violent revolution to be orchestrated by a vanguard and leading inevitably to state-controlled capitalism. ST

## Film Review

### On the Revolutionary Road

**The Motorcycle Diaries. The Dukes, Lancaster.**



Gael García Bernal as Che

It's become a common practice to give directors grammatical ownership of a film regardless of how much input they have. So we have Hitchcock's *The Birds*, Anderson's *If*, and

Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut*, as well as Polanski's *Macbeth* and Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet*. Directors, like managers, are important to some extent, but most people know that when the boss is off the firm runs just as well, if not better. The practice of elevating the director to a position of supreme importance relegates to inconsequential roles the hundreds of other workers involved in a production. To make a film without a director would be difficult; to make one without engineers, musicians, caterers and cleaners would be impossible.

Such hierarchical structures have dominated society for so long that they appear natural and permanent, and revolutionary action has succeeded only to replace one hierarchy with another. Struggles for communism become struggles for fairer capitalism, as the experience of Latin America shows. Its turbulent recent history has produced a gallery of memorable radicals, but in terms of cult status there are few to compare with Ernesto Che Guevara. *The Motorcycle Diaries*, of which the director Walter Salles was one of the many workers involved in its making, concerns the early life of one of the 20th century's most charismatic rebels and whose image has become one of its most enduring icons.

Set in 1952, Guevara and his friend Alberto Granado take off on a 1939 Norton for a tour of South America intending to bring medical relief (they are both doctors)

to the needy, and sexual relief to their own needy libidos. But the exuberance and exhilaration of single young men high-tailing it around foreign countries is balanced by the need to do good beyond the remit of the Hippocratic oath which we see developing in the 23-year-old Guevara as the journey progresses. As the real Che explained in *On Revolutionary Medicine*: "I came into close contact with poverty, hunger and disease and I began to realise that there were things that were almost as important to me as becoming famous and I wanted to help those people."

Where medicine cannot help, Guevara offers money, moral support and brutal honesty. On behalf of dispossessed peasants he throws stones and hurls abuse. For the sick of the leper colony where he briefly works, he swims the river that separates them from the healthy whilst battling against currents and his own asthma. This is Che the champion of the downtrodden, the challenger of injustice, the idol in the making. Consequently, the film itself is fertilised with the concerns of its hero and a message begins to form. This becomes clear at the end when a montage of South America's working and peasant class is displayed in a vividness only monochrome can achieve. These people are still with us, the film seems to say. There is still work to be done.

Fortunately the film has no anachronisms which refer to Guevara's later status or appearance; no scenes with him in a department store plumping for the beret or trying on a pair of Cuban heels. Joy and misery are lucidly brought to life in a film that can be enjoyed even if you are one of the few people who has never heard of Che Guevara.

There are as few things to say about the cult of Guevara as there are about the cult of the director. Both reinforce the notion that socio-cultural events are made only by powerful individuals rather than by the thousands of workers who truly make history. Perhaps it is time we donned our berets, put on our army boots and proclaimed in sonorous tones: 'Workers of the film industry - unite!'

NW

## TV Review

### Go Tell the Spartans

**Time Commanders, BBC2, Sunday 7.45pm**

There's no doubt that the rapid development of computer graphic imaging has done wonders for livening up history documentaries that used to rely on bearded men lyricising over lumps of masonry in a field. By filling in all the visual blanks it has opened up a fascinating subject to a generation of new enthusiasts who find archaeology a bore and Tony Robinson terminally aggravating. But even with CGI there's a limit to how gripping you can make an Iron Age settlement or an Egyptian temple complex. Now, perhaps inevitably, comes the adrenalin-fuelled rush of a real time video game crossover where teams of men (well, it's a man thing) take on the roles of ancient generals and refight famous battles on a huge computer screen.

In the first series Eddie Mair, normally lugubrious even on the radio, looked positively tragic as he watched suburban

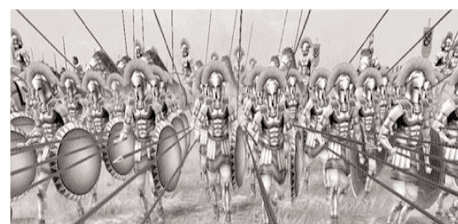
Essex car salesmen pretending to be world-conquering military leaders and throwing away their virtual armies in clueless abandon. In the second series Richard Hammond bounds around like a boy scout cheering on all the corking good fun and offering pointlessly inane advice like "don't let them get you in the flank!", while two dour bona-fide experts sit upstairs and witter grumpily about everything the 'generals' are doing wrong. Occasionally the teams even win, but even so it rarely seems that they have much idea what they are doing.

To anyone who imagines that historical battles were gigantic chessgames played out by masterminds this game reflects the truer historical picture, which is that battles were usually ugly and confusing messes presided over by frequently incompetent generals who were there by virtue of birth rather than merit.

The popularity of this show can scarcely have anything to do with any widespread knowledge of or interest in the history behind these battles or of the times in which they occurred. The vicarious thrill of being a general in charge of mass slaughter is perhaps bound to appeal to individuals who have no real power in society and whose only realistic experience of battle would ever be as cannon-food. It's only a bit of fun, yet the concept is surprisingly repulsive.

All through history soldiers like these were 'spent' like so much disposable currency on the whim of human beings behaving like gods in the interests of wealth and power. For all their clockwork clone appearance these virtual soldiers are good enough to represent those historical but nameless human beings whose cruel lives and terrible deaths are being played out for our amusement. And as the graphics improve and the mutilation and gore acquire better and more prurient detail, the savagery of power and powerlessness becomes ever more poignant, and the pity of war ever more pitiable.

What really sticks in the craw and what this show inadvertently emphasizes is



the thought that everything that holds meaning and value in our lives is actually meaningless and valueless to our rulers. Indeed the computer graphic algorithms reinforce this in a way since they simply create one virtual soldier and then make multiple identical copies to form the virtual armies. One can't escape the feeling that the owning class of the world must see us in largely the same way, as essentially wealth-producing bacteria without names, faces, rights or identity, cultured on their slides in order to grow them new wealth, and to be disposed of whenever we become unproductive. What is even more chilling is the idea that we ourselves might even adopt in some sense their view of us, certainly enough to fight all the savage battles of the future on their behalf. No wonder socialists oppose all wars.

PJS

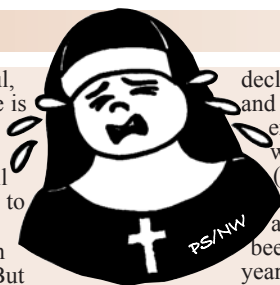
# Fifty Years Ago

## Atheism on the Air

It would appear that in over 30 years of its existence the B.B.C. has never once permitted anybody to voice an opinion in favour of Atheism in any shape or form, until one evening in January when Mrs. Margaret Knight (lecturer in psychology at Aberdeen University), was permitted to state in her broadcast on "Morality without Religion" that we should tell our children that we no longer believed in God although some people still do. She compared God with Santa Claus and referred to the Christian myths as useless for moral instruction. In her opinion if we taught children these biblical myths, when they grew up and learnt that they were at variance with the facts, they would be easy bait for Communism. The problem of evil was one point which she dealt with by declaring that an infinitely wise and all powerful God would not create evil. "If God cannot prevent evil

then he is not all powerful, and if he will not, then he is not all Good." The answer that many Christians give is that evil is man-made and nothing to do with God, or that its existence proves that man has departed from God. But here she said that there are a lot of evil things among the animals for which mankind certainly is not responsible. "The cat," she said, "takes delight in playing with a mouse and inflicting torture on it until the mouse dies after a long and drawn out and painful death." The rest of the talk was about what she called "scientific humanism" and the education of children without the traditional religious beliefs.

The next day the Press was shocked and upset. The New Chronicle's leading article was headed "Atheism on the Air" in which it



"I've lost my faith in the BBC!"

declared "Should she have been allowed to put and press her points without a balancing exposition of Christian beliefs? That is where we think the B.B.C. went wrong." (14/1/55.)

Why this wonderful tolerant idea of a balancing exposition? Has not the B.B.C. been broadcasting religious beliefs for 30 years every day and often several times a day on all programmes and by thousands of exponents? Have they not a committee that on religious broadcasts see that we are all well soaked in traditional religious ideology?

Letters to the Press poured in by the thousand: such an hysterical outburst of injured religious pride has not been seen for a long time.

(From an article by H. Jarvis, Socialist Standard, March, 1955)



## Meetings

### MANCHESTER DAY SCHOOL

Saturday 23 April, 1-5 pm  
Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester (off Albert

Square)

Theme: 'World Poverty'  
More details next month

### ADVANCE NOTICE

### LONDON DAY SCHOOL

Saturday 9 April, 11am - 5pm  
**HUMAN NATURE AND HUMAN SOCIETY**

(full details next month)

Room 11, Friends House, 173 Euston Rd (side entrance), NW1

### Glasgow Discussion Group

Community Central Hall  
304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow  
**Wednesday 16 March 8pm**

### WHAT NEXT FOR THE REFORMERS?

On how recent ideas such as the environmentalists and the anti-globalisation movement are likely to fare in the future.

### LANCASTER BRANCH

Public Meeting. Monday **March 14th** Gregson Centre, Moor Lane, Lancaster, 8pm.

Subject: How will a socialist society deal with natural disasters?  
Speaker: P. Shannon

### SWANSEA BRANCH

Monday **March 14**. 7.30 pm.  
Unitarian Church, High St, Swansea

Talk: 'GM Crops. Should they be used?' Speaker: Brian Johnson

### SWANSEA BRANCH

Monday **April 11** 7.30 pm.  
Unitarian Church, High St, Swansea (next to Argos).

Talk: Election activity. Is it worth it?

## Party News

### Election News

By the time you read this the general election campaign might be officially under way. As announced, the Socialist Party is standing a candidate in the Vauxhall constituency in South London. Our Head Office, which is in the constituency, is serving as the campaign rooms. If you want to help get the socialist message across against the Gang of Three

(Labour, Liberal, Tory: Same Old Futile Story) and their apprentices in the Green Party (and other would-be managers of capitalism such as RESPECT and VANITAS), phone 0207 622 3811 or call in at 52 Clapham High St, SW4 (nearest tube: Clapham North).

If you are connected to the internet you can also follow the campaign on a daily basis by visiting the site of our campaign blog "Vaux Populi" at <http://spgb.blogspot.com>

### EDINBURGH BRANCH

West Lothian Socialist Discussion Group  
The Lanthorn, Kennilworth Rise Dedridge, Livingston 7.45 till 9.30

**2nd and 4th Wednesdays each month**  
**Wednesday 9th March**

**The Economic Calculation Argument**  
Speaker Matt Culbert

**Wednesday 23rd March**

Admission free All welcome

## Declaration of Principles

*This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.*

### Object

**The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.**

### Declaration of Principles

**The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds**

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.)

by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom,

the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



# Brown reorganises poverty

*They don't give out more money, they just give out the same money in different directions. And the more they change the systems, the less the system changes.*

The Labour government is in the process of introducing new measures through the inclusion in the social security system of tax credits which more than likely will not only deter workers from claiming their full entitlement to benefits, but not claim any at all.

Gordon Brown and his team in the Treasury are trying their hardest to put over the image that these new measures are a direct assault on child poverty when in fact all they are doing is keeping the annual budget for social security stable around the figure of £100 billion, knowing full well that once it starts going over this amount his future career in politics will be on the line. So despite the fact that politicians go through the pretence of improving certain features of social security, it is nothing else than shadow boxing around the issue of child poverty. For there's no intention, so far as this government (or any other whatever its political hue) is concerned, of doling out any new money.

By the time the full package of the current social security overhaul is completed a new means of administering and calculating entitlement to social security benefits will be in place, where the emphasis will be on the introduction of further means-tested benefits rather than on non-means-tested benefits. Means-tested benefits, besides being far more costly to administer than non-means-tested ones, are subject to bureaucratic hold-ups where the claimant suffers the consequences of waiting anything from 6 to 13 weeks for their claim to be processed, leading to a crisis period when you're unsure if your claim will be successful or not.

Ever since its introduction in 1948 the social security system and in particular its means-tested benefits has been notoriously associated with compulsion, complexity and confusion and it's likely that the outcome of these changes will mean more of the same. Indeed, for many claimants the benefits system is in total and permanent disarray where the possibility of obtaining a 'fair shake' in an effort to maximize their full entitlement to benefits depends on their individual skills in negotiating a legal minefield

**"the bureaucratic nightmare associated with social security claims has resulted in an increase in workers finding it is not worth the hassle"**

with sanity intact.

So it is no surprise that the bureaucratic nightmare associated with social security claims has resulted in a significant increase in the percentage of workers finding it is not worth the hassle. For example, in Rhondda Cynon Taf alone, it is estimated by the census that there are some 6,000 individuals who despite being entitled to some kind of social security do not claim any whatsoever. Nationally, there are also estimates of approximately 800,000 pensioners who fail to claim their full entitlement to a various array of benefits. These are just some of the many reasons why £6.2 billion was returned to the Treasury in 2002-3 in unclaimed

benefits. But these figures also suggest that, when considered as a whole, the barriers of compulsion, complexity and confusion are inherent to the social security system. As such they are proving to be effective bureaucratic deterrents for claimants, thus keeping the burden on the capitalist class of meeting the cost of maintenance and reproduction of the non-working section of the working class below what they have estimated. These estimates are in any event is based on a growing domestic economy and, when this is no longer the case, historically social security is hit the first and hardest.

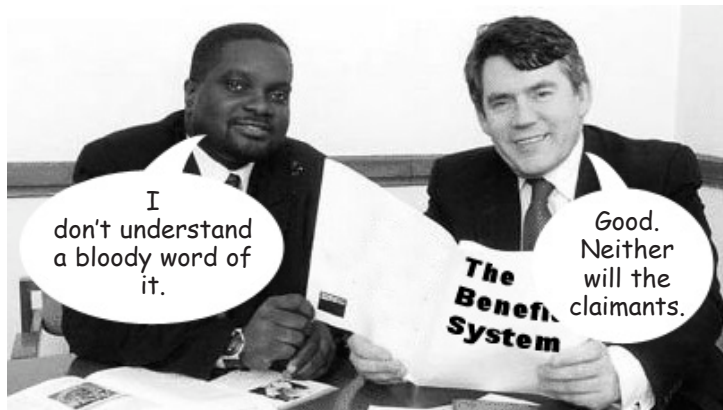
The introduction of tax credits also includes major changes in the administration and payment of social security, and especially who is legally responsible for any mistakes that are made by either the claimants or bureaucrats. Whilst both benefits and tax credits are part and parcel of the social security system, currently the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) are responsible for the paper chase and payment of benefits, and only responsible for the administration of tax credits, whilst the Inland Revenue is solely responsible for the payment of tax credits. Eventually, it is planned that the DWP will deal only with

the administration of benefits and tax credits and the Inland Revenue with the payments of all social security and tax credits. Obviously, during this transition period there is a considerable amount of bureaucratic and legal overlap between the DWP and the Inland Revenue, resulting in further increases in the miscalculation of benefits.

Under the previous Department of Social Security, any overpayments were the

responsibility of the local office to correct and if the overpayment was through a miscalculation - made by them - it effectively meant that under the law, as it then stood; the claimant was not compelled to make a repayment. Although this obvious loophole must have cost millions in lost revenue, it most certainly left many a claimant with a knowing smile every giro day. For under the previous law the claimant could not be punished or held responsible for someone else's mistake. The change in the law now means that the claimant is held responsible for notifying the DWP of the miscalculation even when it's the department's mistake. But even when the miscalculation is corrected, the problems for the claimants - especially those on Working Tax Credit (WTC) - don't end there for the overpayments in tax credits can go on being paid until the end of the tax year. This means in effect that WTC claimants in particular can face a comparative mountain of debt, whether they are responsible for it or not.

But the problems for the 6 million claimants of WTC still don't stop there. On its introduction Gordon Brown hailed it as a radical step forward in providing a stepping-stone out of the dependency and poverty trap by granting those on low wages a top-up, dependent on their circumstances. What he didn't say was that when the claimant actually took that step to increase their financial prospects in the labour market they enter a new tax bracket, which is then calculated over the whole year and also puts them outside the scope of WTC. Which meant for the former WTC claimant who followed Brown's advice, the Inland Revenue could in effect penalize them to the tune of £2000 to £3000 in backdated overpayments of WTC, thus wiping out any



corresponding increases in wages.

For the WTC claimant it means, if they don't want to be faced with a hefty demand from the Inland Revenue, to fine-tune any changes in the job market so that their income corresponds to the yearly tax demand. Presently, approximately 2 million claimants, or around 33 percent of the total claimants for WTC, are facing the prospect of paying these repayments within the next twelve months. If they fail to meet this deadline, which undoubtedly many of them will, they face being saddled with a further bill for the interest on the amount still owing - which is usually over the basic rate of interest charged by the banks. Gordon Brown, the CEO of Financial Operations GB plc, with a client base of 2 million, has probably created the biggest loan-shark business in Europe, feeding off the poverty of those workers who are trying their hardest to improve their means of living. ■

**BRIAN JOHNSON**





## Watch the parking meters

In a strange couplet Bob Dylan once sang "Don't follow leaders, watch the parking meters." It seemed a weird rhyme, although the advice about leadership was sound; but a recent report on the Duke of Westminster may have given some substance to Dylan's advice. "The duke, who is 53, is Britain's second-richest man, whose wealth is based on tracts of land in Central London, including 200 acres in Belgravia and 100 acres in Mayfair. The land is so valuable that the Grosvenor Group sold a parking space in Mayfair for £65,000 in 2002" The Times (25 January). Nice one, Bob. We won't be allowed to park there, will we?



Contra special prosecutor for giving false testimony about his role in illicitly raising money for the contras, but he pleaded guilty to two lesser offences (including withholding information from the Congress) in order to avoid a trial and a possible jail sentence. The Washington Post columnist Mary McGrory said of him, "Members of Congress remember Abram's snarling appearance at



Contras - famous defenders of democracy and human rights

## Telling it like it is

It is not often that capitalists tell the truth about their system, so we couldn't resist recording the following rare statement. "Governments, not oil companies, must act now on global warning or there will be a 'disaster', the chairman of Shell's UK arm warned last night. ... 'Whether you like it or not, we live in a capitalist society. If we at Shell ceased to find and extract and market fossil fuel products while there was a demand for them, we would fail as a company. Shell would disappear as any kind of economic force,' Lord Oxburgh maintained" The Independent (26 January). Even the owning class know this society doesn't work. It sucks.

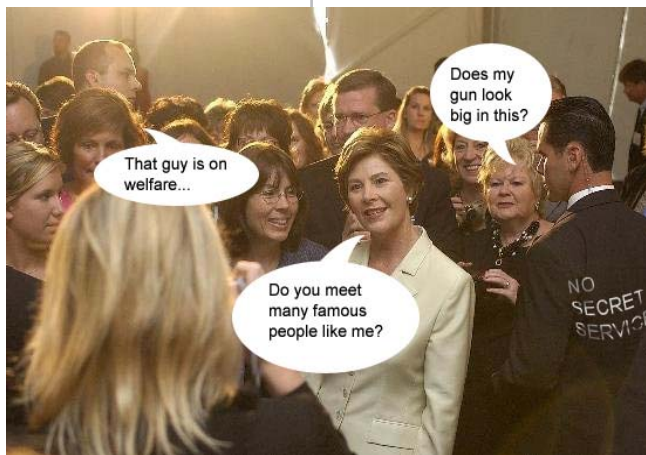
## Human rights adviser?

"Elliot Abrams, a special assistant to the president and an assistant secretary of state in the Reagan administration, has been appointed deputy national security adviser with a focus on promoting global democracy and human rights" Associated Press (2 February). This is the same Abrams who was indicted by the Iran-

committee hearings, defending death squads and dictators, denying massacres, lying about illegal US activities in support of the Nicaraguan contras." Wow, we have a real champion of human rights here.

## Its a mad, mad world

"Laura Bush - or 'First Fashionista' as the New York Post has dubbed her - was posing for a photo opportunity on a catwalk next to designers Caroline Herrera and Oscar de la Renta. Her arrival turned Bryant Park, the temporary Midtown home of the fashion circus, into a twilight



zone. The homeless people had disappeared, policemen dotted the pavement instead. A large black van was parked ostentatiously in a pedestrian area, and filled with men in suits emblazoned with the words "secret service" in white capital letters" The Observer (6 February). This prompts us to ask two questions: where had the homeless people disappeared to?, and how secret is a secret serviceman with a secret service label? We imagine the homeless will have been put out of camera shot, and none of them allowed to speak. This is called democracy?

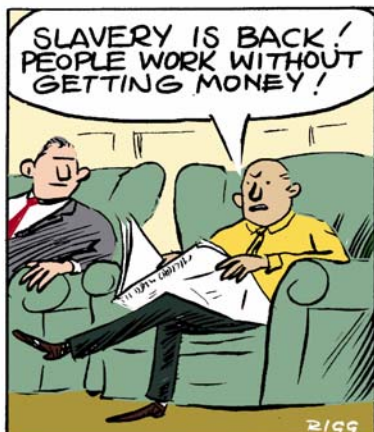
## An ill wind

Two items from the same magazine illustrate what a hellish society capitalism is. They show the awful consequence of a social disaster like world poverty and how even a natural disaster can be a money-making opportunity. "Poverty is a man-made tsunami. 'The biggest tyranny in the world is the tyranny of an empty stomach.' John Samuels, a founding member of Global Call to Action Against Poverty, launched at the World Social Forum." "\$300 Market price, before the tsunami, to rent a house with indoor plumbing in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, for one month. \$4,000 Current market price, due to

increased demand from aid workers and journalists" Time (7 February). Making money out of human misery is disgusting, but then capitalism is a disgusting society.

## Free lunch

by Rigg



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